To: Mayor and Members
   Board of Health

From: Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
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Date: February 8, 2008

Re: Active Transportation Supportive Overpasses and Bridges
   (BOH08001/PW08023) - (City Wide)

Council Direction:

At the November 2007 Board of Health meeting, during discussion following the Healthy Communities presentation (BOH07063) staff were directed to “obtain the motion from Halton respecting pedestrian bridges over the 400 series highway system and refer it to the Board of Health for discussion.”

Information:

At the November 26, 2007 Board of Health meeting (report BOH07063), Gil Penalosa, Executive Director of Walk and Bike for Life, presented the importance of creating cities that facilitate healthy, active living. Included in this was the importance of creating connected streets and trails that encourage active transportation. During the discussion, a motion put forth by Halton Region for the Halton Regional Chair to write a letter to the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) regarding highway overpasses was mentioned. Active transportation supportive connections, such as overpasses, are important to facilitate healthy, active living. In Hamilton, many of these types of initiatives are currently being addressed. City of Hamilton Councillors requested staff to obtain this motion and refer it to the Board of Health for discussion. Halton’s recommendation report (Appendix A) and letter (Appendix B) are attached.

In September 2007, Halton’s Medical Officer of Health and the Commissioner of Planning and Public Works submitted a recommendation report to the Chair and members of the Health and Social Services Committee. It was identified in the report that there were major revisions being made to the 400 series highways running through Halton to accommodate High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes. This highway divided many Halton communities and created a physical barrier for pedestrians and cyclists. Since many of the highway overpasses were scheduled to be fixed concurrently, Halton passed a motion for Halton’s Regional Chair to send a letter to the Ministry of Transportation, “outlining the importance of safe and accessible controlled-access
highway crossings”. This was noted as an opportunity for the Ministry of Transportation, Halton Region, Oakville, and Burlington to work collaboratively to create well-connected, safe, attractive, and accessible controlled-access highway crossings for all users. It was mentioned in Halton’s report that the Municipal Act specifies that walking (sidewalks) and cycling paths are the responsibility of local municipalities. As such, Halton Region was willing to provide financial contributions for the creation of these active transportation supportive overpasses. The recommendation was approved at Regional Council on October 10, 2007 and the letter was sent October 17, 2007

Regarding the Halton Region position on funding, the City of Hamilton’s Public Works Department negotiates financial arrangements for projects that involve the MTO on a project-by-project basis.

There may be a few Hamilton roadways that span the MTO freeway network for which this issue needs to be addressed, but locations have yet to be identified. The City is updating the Cycling Master Plan this year and this item will be investigated at that time. Few locations are anticipated, as many crossings have already been addressed, such as the existing King Street and Main Street facilities over Highway 403, and the multi-use trail spanning Highway 403 in the vicinity of the Lincoln M. Alexander Parkway.

Several current Hamilton area projects that involve the MTO incorporate active transportation facilities. These projects include bike lanes on York Boulevard crossing the Highway 403 ramps and the MTO’s new Highway 6 interchange between Highway 403 and the escarpment at York Road, which does include reasonable shoulder design to accommodate bike lanes. The multi-use trail planned to cross the QEW in the vicinity of the Red Hill Valley Parkway is another MTO related project, and to date, the MTO has committed to paying for the construction of the centre pier that will support the bridge.

National and provincial guidelines for the design of pedestrian and cycling facilities in the vicinity of freeway interchanges have been developed. Therefore it is not inappropriate to request the MTO to accommodate pedestrian and cycling facilities.

**Proposed Hamilton Active Transportation Supportive Initiatives Update**

In Hamilton, there are barrier free, active transportation routes proposed that will overcome major missing links in the City’s trail network. The proposed routes will be dedicated to active transportation and will not be shared by motorists. Proposed areas are determined based on a route score. The more significant the route score as it contributes to the entire trail network, the higher priority Public Works places on it for development. These are then ranked in order of significance:

1. **Queen Elizabeth Way Pedestrian/Cycling Bridge**

Public Works staff introduced the design and costs for an enhanced pedestrian/cycling bridge crossing the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) in East Hamilton from the Brampton/Rennie Street landfills to the Hamilton Waterfront Trail. The Ministry of Transportation would undertake construction of the centre pier of the bridge as part of its current contract. Potential partners for the cost of the bridge include the City, the Province, the Federal Government, the Ministry of Transportation (QEW Pier), and community

*Note: Not all of initiatives are related to MTO roadways.*
organizations. Tentative construction tender date pending available funds would occur early winter 2009 with the bridge available for use in the spring of 2010. Funding for this initiative is still being researched. This bridge will facilitate active transportation; this is a deficiency for the Centennial Parkway interchange, as the Centennial Parkway overpass provides a sidewalk on only one side, and no cycling lanes. The QE Wrocław crossing scores as the top priority in the Hamilton Recreational Trails Master Plan (HRTMP), initiative number 5-2.

2. Hamilton - Brantford Rail Trail

Plans are in the works for the development of the Hamilton - Brantford Rail Trail connection to downtown over the existing 403 Canadian Pacific rail crossing. The majority of funding is in place for this initiative. The Hamilton – Brantford Trail crossing scores as the number two initiative in the Hamilton Recreational Trails Master Plan (HRTMP #1-8).

3. Anchor/Arbor Road Bridge

New construction of the pedestrian / cycling crossing of the Lincoln Alexander Parkway between Anchor Road and Arbor Road has been proposed. This initiative was originally evaluated at the time of the construction of the Lincoln Alexander Parkway and would connect the Red Hill Valley Trail to the Chippewa / Caledonia Rail Trail. The Environmental Assessment was completed as part of the Lincoln Alexander Parkway project. This project has yet to be funded although the project ranks as an important component for completing the 10 km East Mountain Loop Trail. The Anchor/Arbor crossing scores as the number three initiative in the Hamilton Recreational Trails Master Plan (HRTMP #6-1).

Long Term Project

The Setting Sail West Harbour Secondary plan identified the need for a barrier-free route to connect the Strathcona Neighbourhood in Ward 1 to Hamilton’s Waterfront. The Environmental Assessment (EA) for this project is underway, and preliminary construction costs will be finalized later this year through the EA evaluation of design alternatives. Funding sources have yet to be identified.

The November Healthy Communities presentation identified connectivity as one of the urban design principles necessary to increase walkability to improve air quality, sense of community, healthy weights, physical activity, decrease motor vehicle collisions, as well as to obtain economic benefits. Well connected streets and routes increase the likelihood of active transportation by providing more direct routes to destinations. Support for these types of initiatives will create a healthier Hamilton for all of us.

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Public Health Services

Scott Stewart, C.E.T.  
General Manager  
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The Regional Municipality of Halton

RECOMMENDATION

1. THAT Council authorize the Regional Chair to send a letter to the Minister of Transportation outlining the importance of safe and accessible controlled-access highway crossings as discussed in Report No. MO-55-07/PPW140-07 re: “Letter to Minister of Transportation Regarding Highway Overpasses”.

2. THAT a copy of the letter and Report No. MO-55-07/PPW140-07 be sent to the Ministers of Health and Long-Term Care and Health Promotion, the four local municipalities in Halton and Ontario public health units.

REPORT

Purpose

The purpose of report MO-55-07/PPW140-07 is to provide Regional Council with information on the importance of road design in removing barriers to non-motorized transportation and to seek Regional Council approval to send a letter to the Minister of Transportation as outlined in report MO-55-07/PPW140-07.

Background

The redesign of controlled-access highways can provide an opportunity to overcome barriers that divide many of Halton’s neighbourhoods. The overpasses and bridges crossing these highways provide important connections for the citizens of Halton’s different neighbourhoods. It is vitally important that these structures are safe and accessible for all users including transit, pedestrians and cyclists.

The health impacts of a transportation network focused on the automobile are clear. The transportation sector is one of the most significant sources of air pollutants as well as greenhouse
gases that contribute to climate change. Further, motor vehicle crashes are responsible for a significant number of deaths and injuries in our society. The Ontario Road Safety Annual Report 2004 states that in Ontario, about 800 motor vehicle occupants, pedestrians and cyclists are killed and 73,000 are injured each year from motor vehicle crashes. Finally, as motor vehicle dependency increases, the use of active modes of transportation such as walking and cycling decreases, leading to decreased physical activity with all of its concomitant health risks. Therefore, walking, cycling and public transit use must not only be encouraged, they must be made into the easy choices (as convenient as the automobile).

The way Halton’s neighbourhoods are designed and built impacts the ability of a community to be healthy. The way neighbourhoods are connected can reduce the need for commuting by car, encourage active modes of transportation, and make efficient public transportation more feasible. To address the importance of designing healthy communities, Halton, other Ontario communities and the government of Ontario have embraced the concept of “complete communities” (PPW-76-07).

The complete communities concept highlights the importance of ensuring that walking, bicycling and public transit become practical elements of an active transportation system through the provision of appropriate facilities and linkages within and between neighbourhoods. Complete communities further stresses that the transportation planning process must focus on providing a safe, comfortable, balanced network for all users within new and existing communities.

In particular, vulnerable populations, such as seniors, youth, and people living with disabilities, need appropriate and safe pedestrian, cycling, and public transit facilities. Children and the elderly are the two groups most vulnerable to automobile-pedestrian collisions. Walking, cycling, and public transit are often the only transportation methods available to such persons. In addition, for all non-motorized users, controlled-access highways represent major obstacles to accessing day-to-day services and amenities. Progress towards physical activity promotion and improvement of air quality is also thereby inhibited.

Currently, many of the overpasses are barriers for non-motorized travel. In southern Halton in particular, the Ministry of Transportation structures are the only means of connection between our most highly urbanized areas. It is especially important that pedestrians, cyclists and public transit users have equal access to the neighbourhoods north and south of the QEW given that the major GO Transit rail infrastructure runs parallel to the QEW and GO Bus service runs on this corridor.

As a result of the widening of the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) to accommodate High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes, many of the bridges and overpasses will undergo improvements. The expansion of the QEW provides the Ministry of Transportation, in partnership with Halton Region, Oakville and Burlington, with a significant opportunity to design the overpasses so they are not barriers to travel by active modes of transportation and public transit by ensuring, through appropriate design and financing, a balanced transportation network for all users. Lessons learned consequent to the QEW facility improvements can be applied to future work involving Halton Region’s other two municipalities, Milton and Halton Hills.
Staff are recommending that Council communicate with the Minister of Transportation to outline: Halton Region’s and Ontario’s shared values in attaining healthy communities; the importance of the “complete community” concept of “connectivity”, specifically as provided by controlled-access highway crossings that are safe, attractive, and accessible for all users; and the importance of an integrated balanced transportation network supported by integrated, balanced planning and funding within a partnership framework.

FINANCIAL/PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

Any alternative interchange configuration and design related to removing the barriers to non-motorized transportation will result in higher costs associated with the project. Traditionally the existing agreement with the Province is that whoever is the proponent for change above what is existing, is responsible for funding the change. In the case of a bike lane/sidewalk the cost implications can be substantial if the structure needs widening to accommodate the change. For example on Bronte Road, currently under construction, the Region requested and is paying for the additional two lanes on Bronte to provide a total of four lanes, as well as protection for expansion to six lanes in the future. A new multi-use pathway is also planned through the existing interchange with the cooperation of the Ministry of Transportation (MTO), the Region, and the Town of Oakville. The Municipal Act specifies that the walking (sidewalks) and cycling paths are the responsibility of the local municipalities. Therefore, any of these types of changes would require the full financial support of the local municipalities at the time of implementation. This support would be established during the Environmental Assessment (EA) process on the individual facilities as projects come forward for proposed work.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Programming in this report addresses Theme 1 – Control and Manage Growth for Sustainable Communities Goal 2- Strengthen the transportation system for all modes of transportation to meet Halton’s needs 2b) Provide advice to the Province to ensure that Halton’s objectives are addressed through an open process on all highway expansion strategies; Theme 2 – Protect and Enhance our Natural Environment Goal 1 Develop a plan and implement activities to protect and enhance Halton’s air quality, Action c) Develop and advocate for policies that support air quality improvements; and Theme 3: Create and Improve Safe, Healthy, Liveable, Inclusive Communities, Goal 2 – Promote and enhance the delivery of preventative health services, Action 1d) Increase the proportion of Halton residents at a healthy weight by preventing obesity, supporting physical activity and promoting healthy eating.
Conclusion

The Ministry of Transportation, Halton Region and its municipalities have an important opportunity to work collaboratively in the development of a balanced transportation network that supports all users crossing the major highway system. By providing safe and attractive pedestrian and cycling facilities during the construction (and reconstruction) of overpasses and bridges (structures), the Ministry, Halton Region, and the Local Municipalities can work hand in hand towards their shared vision of achieving healthy communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce See
Director, Community Health Services

Robert M. Nosal MD FRCPC
Commissioner and Medical Officer of Health

Peter M. Crockett P. Eng.
Commissioner of Planning and Public Works

Approved by

Pat Moyle
Chief Administrative Officer

If you have any questions on the content of this report, please contact: Joyce See Tel. # 7890
Andrew Head Tel. # 7475
October 17, 2007

The Honourable Donna Cansfield  
Minister of Transportation  
3rd Floor, Ferguson Block  
77 Wellesley Street West  
Toronto, Ontario  M7A 1Z8

Dear Minister:

I am writing to inform you about Report MO-55-07/PPW-140-07, which is attached for your reference, that was passed at Regional Council on October 10th, 2007. Like the Government of Ontario, Halton believes strongly in creating healthy, sustainable, and liveable communities. As a result of the widening of the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) to accommodate High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes, many of the bridges and overpasses will undergo improvements. The expansion of the QEW provides the Ministry of Transportation, in partnership with Halton Region, Oakville and Burlington, with a significant opportunity to design overpasses that are not barriers to travel by active modes of transportation or by public transit. Appropriate design and financing will ensure a balanced transportation network for all users.

Halton Region believes in the importance of building our communities as “complete communities” that are accessible to people at all stages of life. We believe that walking, bicycling and public transit must become practical elements of the transportation system through the provision of appropriate facilities and linkages within and between neighbourhoods. We believe that the net result of the transportation planning process should be safe, comfortable travel for pedestrians and bicyclists within new and existing communities.

In Halton, major highways split many of our neighbourhoods, with overpasses and bridges providing important connections. It is vitally important that these links are safe and accessible for all users. Vulnerable people, such as seniors, youth, and people living with disabilities, are users who need appropriate and safe pedestrian, bicycling, and transit facilities. Walking, bicycling, and transit are often the only transportation methods available to such persons. In their present forms, the overpasses and bridges are major barriers for these vulnerable users. In addition, for all non-motorized users, controlled-access highways represent major obstacles to accessing day-to-day services and amenities. Halton’s progress towards physical activity promotion (getting people out of cars), injury prevention (decreasing car-pedestrian/car-cyclist collisions), and improvement of air quality (decreasing motor vehicle usage) is also thereby inhibited.
In southern Halton, the Ministry of Transportation bridges are the only means of connecting our most highly urbanized areas. Major GO Transit rail infrastructure run parallel to the QEW, and GO Bus service runs on this highway. We need a balanced network supporting all users crossing the QEW bridges so that pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit users have access to the neighbourhoods and communities north and south of the QEW. Regarding Halton Region’s two northern municipalities, Milton and Halton Hills, lessons learned consequent to the QEW facility improvements can be applied to future, similar work on controlled-access highways.

Halton Region and Ontario have shared values in attaining healthy communities, in particular through the concepts of “complete communities” and “connectivity.” In this regard, controlled-access highway crossings that are safe, attractive, and accessible for all users are vital components that can be achieved via an integrated, balanced transportation network supported by integrated, balanced planning within a partnership framework. As such, the Ministry of Transportation and Halton Region and its municipalities have an important opportunity to work collaboratively during the construction or reconstruction of structures crossing controlled-access highways. The Ministry, Halton Region, and the local municipalities can work hand-in-hand towards their shared vision of achieving healthy communities.

I appreciate you giving this matter your immediate attention and look forward to receiving your comments.

Sincerely,

Gary Carr
Regional Chair

cc:
The Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
The Honourable Laurel Broten, Minister of the Environment
The Honourable George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
The Honourable Jim Watson, Minister of Health Promotion
Mayor Cam Jackson, City of Burlington
Mayor Rob Burton, Town of Oakville
Mayor Gordon Krantz, Town of Milton
Mayor Rick Bonnette, Town of Halton Hills
Ontario Medical Officers of Health